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FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
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INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 2957
RUEHYN/AMEMBASSY SANAA IMMEDIATE 1745
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SUBJECT: SAUDI ARABIA RESPONDS TO HOUTHI CEASEFIRE OFFER

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11. (U) Speaking to the press from the Saudi border region of Jizan on January 27, Assistant Defense Minister Khalid bin Sultan responded to the ceasefire offer made by Abdul Malik Al-Houthi on January 25 (reftel). He maintained that the Saudis had driven the Houthis from their territory prior to the Houthi offer of a truce, and laid out three conditions for an official ceasefire: the withdrawal of all Houthi troops, including snipers, from Saudi territory; the return of the six missing Saudi soldiers; and the deployment of ROYG troops to the border area to ensure security. The SAG would view completion of these acts as "a demonstration of good will" by the Houthis, and would treat the conflict as in internal Yemeni issue.

12. (SBU) COMMENT: Throughout the border conflict, the Saudis have maintained that they would not negotiate directly with the Houthis, as doing so would undercut the authority of their ally, President Saleh. While responding positively to the offer of a cease-fire, Khalid bin Sultan's carefully chosen words make it clear the Saudis' support for Saleh remains undiminished. END COMMENT.

SMITH